

COMMITTEE PRINT OF H.R. 1527
(REFLECTING THE ACTIONS OF THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH ON JULY 10, 2008)

Strike all after the enacting clause and insert the following:

1 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

2 This Act may be cited as the “Rural Veterans Access
3 to Care Act”.

4 SEC. 2. PILOT PROGRAM OF ENHANCED CONTRACT CARE
5 AUTHORITY FOR HEALTH CARE NEEDS OF
6 VETERANS IN HIGHLY RURAL AREAS.

7 (a) IN GENERAL.—Section 1703 of title 38, United
8 States Code, is amended by adding at the end the fol-
9 lowing new subsection:

10 “(e)(1) The Secretary shall conduct a pilot program
11 which permits highly rural veterans—

12 “(A) who are enrolled in the system of patient
13 enrollment established under section 1705(a) of this
14 title, and

15 “(B) who reside within Veterans Integrated
16 Service Network 1, 15, 18, and 19,

1 to elect to receive covered health services for which such
2 veterans are eligible through a non-Department health-
3 care provider.

4 “(2) The election under paragraph (1) shall be made
5 by submitting an application to the Secretary in accord-
6 ance with such regulations as the Secretary prescribes.
7 The Secretary shall authorize such services to be furnished
8 to the veteran pursuant to contracting with such a pro-
9 vider to furnish such services to such veteran.

10 “(3) For purposes of this subsection, a highly rural
11 veteran is one who—

12 “(A) resides in a location that is—

13 “(i) more than 60 miles driving distance
14 from the nearest Department health-care facil-
15 ity providing primary care services, if the vet-
16 eran is seeking such services;

17 “(ii) more than 120 miles driving distance
18 from the nearest Department health-care facil-
19 ity providing acute hospital care, if the veteran
20 is seeking such care; or

21 “(iii) more than 240 miles driving distance
22 from the nearest Department health-care facil-
23 ity providing tertiary care, if the veteran is
24 seeking such care; or

1 “(B) in the case of a veteran who resides in a
2 location less than the distance indicated in clause
3 (i), (ii), or (iii) of subparagraph (A), as applicable,
4 experiences such hardship or other difficulties in
5 travel to the nearest appropriate Department health-
6 care facility that such travel is not in the best inter-
7 est of the veteran, as determined by the Secretary
8 pursuant to regulations prescribed for purposes of
9 this subsection.

10 “(4) For purposes of this subsection, a covered health
11 service is any hospital care, medical service, rehabilitative
12 service, or preventative health service authorized to be pro-
13 vided by the Secretary under this chapter or any other
14 provision of law.

15 “(5) For purposes of this subsection, a health-care
16 provider is any qualified entity or individual furnishing a
17 covered health service.

18 “(6) In meeting the requirements of this subsection,
19 the Secretary shall develop the functional capability to
20 provide for the exchange of medical information between
21 the Department and non-Department health-care pro-
22 viders.

23 “(7) This subsection shall apply to covered health
24 services provided during the 3-year period beginning on

1 the 120th day after the date of the enactment of this sub-
2 section.

3 “(8) Not later than the 30th day after the close of
4 each year of the period described in paragraph (6), the
5 Secretary shall submit a report to the Committees of Vet-
6 erans’ Affairs of the House of Representatives and the
7 Senate a report which includes—

8 “(A) the Secretary’s assessment of the program
9 under this subsection, including its cost, volume,
10 quality, patient satisfaction, benefit to veterans, and
11 any other findings and conclusions of the Secretary
12 with respect to such program, and

13 “(B) any recommendations that the Secretary
14 may have for—

15 “(i) continuing of the program,

16 “(ii) extending of the program to other or
17 all service regions of the Department, and

18 “(iii) making the program permanent.”.

19 (b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The Secretary of Veterans
20 Affairs shall implement the amendment made by sub-
21 section (a) not later than the 120th day after the date
22 of the enactment of this Act.

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill to amend title
38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Vet-
erans Affairs to conduct a pilot program to permit cer-
tain highly rural veterans enrolled in the health system

of the Department of Veterans Affairs to receive covered health services through providers other than those of the Department”.

